

VZCZCXRO1196
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH RUEHTRO
DE RUEHGO #0797/01 3430802
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 090802Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9663
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2351
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5845
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 9411
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 7030
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 2374
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2779
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 000797

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/MLS,
PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/09/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM BM

SUBJECT: BURMA: ASSK DOCTOR DEBRIEFS ON RECENT VISIT

REF: A. RANGOON 664
1B. RANGOON 743

RANGOON 00000797 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Political Officer Marc Shaw for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

Summary

11. (C) Dr. Tin Myo Win (aka Douglas), personal physician to Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK), told CDA, a.i., that at a December 3 meeting, ASSK asked him to pass on her gratitude for the opportunity to meet with A/S Campbell and said that she has launched her own engagement efforts with the regime to capitalize on the U.S. policy review. According to Douglas, ASSK believes she has met the regime's conditions to meet Than Shwe and is willing to compromise with the regime; however, she has not yet received any response to her second letter to the Senior General. She continues to seek a meeting with the full National League for Democracy (NLD) leadership and is, Douglas claimed, aware of divisions within the party on whether to engage the GOB. Douglas reported that ASSK's health is fine. End Summary.

Capitalizing on New U.S. Policy, Engaging Than Shwe

12. (C) Dr. Tin Myo Win (aka Douglas) briefed CDA, a.i., on his two-three hour visit with ASSK on December 3 -- his standard call on her the first Thursday of every month. Douglas said ASSK's health is fine and that she is doing well. She asked that he pass on her gratitude for the opportunity to meet with A/S Campbell and described the meeting as "extremely useful." According to Douglas, ASSK said she has initiated her renewed efforts to engage the regime, and Than Shwe personally, as a direct result of the new U.S. engagement policy and the political space she hopes it will create domestically. She told him, however, that she will have to move "carefully." Previous attempts, including direct meetings with Than Shwe and other SPDC members beginning in 2001 failed to achieve the desired outcome.

13. (C) ASSK reportedly told Douglas she believes that through her two letters to Than Shwe (reflets), she is addressing the conditions -- as identified in the GOB

Announcement 1/2007 -- that the regime has set for a direct meeting between her and the Senior General. (Note: In Announcement 1/2007, dated October 5, 2007, the GOB claimed that ASSK "has been exerting efforts for Confrontation, Utter Devastation, and Imposing All Kinds of Sanctions including Economic Sanction against Myanmar. If she declares to give them up, the Senior General will personally meet her.") She emphasized her willingness to cooperate to lift sanctions and to discuss other issues affecting the interests of the country specifically to fulfill the GOB's prerequisites.

¶4. (C) According to Douglas, ASSK has not received any regime response to her second letter. Rumors that an army lieutenant general visited her recently are unfounded, he said.

Holding out for a Meeting with Full NLD Leadership

¶5. (C) ASSK believes the GOB is reluctant to allow her to meet with the full membership of the NLD Central Executive Committee (CEC), and Win Tin in particular, because it fears his "hardline views" may convince ASSK to change her stance on engaging the regime. Nevertheless, ASSK is committed to meeting with the entire party leadership to lay out her thoughts on how to engage the GOB and to reach an agreed-upon approach to issues like the constitution and elections.

¶6. (C) Douglas indicated that ASSK is aware of divisions within the NLD leadership over issues like engaging the regime. He claimed that ASSK is concerned that "NLD hardliners" may create further frictions within the party if there is no progress soon in talks with the regime.

According to Douglas, ASSK believes that if the regime does

RANGOON 00000797 002.2 OF 003

not agree in the near term to allow her to meet with the full NLD CEC, it will be an indication the Senior General has no real interest in engagement. Douglas agreed, calling the issue of the ASSK-NLD CEC meeting an important "litmus test."

Although ASSK is becoming less optimistic, Douglas said she still believes there is a 50/50 chance the regime will enter into genuine dialogue.

¶7. (C) Douglas claimed that ASSK is prepared to narrow the list of constitutional amendments the NLD would require in order to participate in the 2010 elections, in effect clarifying the NLD's Shwegondine Declaration (the document issued in April 2009 by the NLD that calls on the regime to review and amend the 2008 constitution, release all political prisoners, recognize the 1990 election results, and engage in dialogue with the opposition). Douglas would not reveal what ASSK considers to be core amendments, citing confidentiality. Like other decisions, this would have to be blessed by the CEC.

Douglas: Physician and Political Advisor?

¶8. (C) Douglas told us his role extends beyond the purview of providing medical advice to ASSK; he also updates her on political developments, news gleaned from his contacts, and information from various actors, including ethnic representatives (he noted that during his two-three hour meeting with ASSK on December 3, his medical exam took only about 15 minutes; they spent the rest of the time discussing other issues). Douglas reported that he also provides his views to the GOB on issues related to the NLD and ASSK. After the American swimmer incident, for example, the regime reportedly queried him about the likely consequences of sentencing ASSK. Douglas said authorities never ask about the substance of his discussions with ASSK, but do ask about her "health and her mood."

¶9. (C) Douglas said he writes a letter to authorities after every visit with ASSK and believes the correspondence finds

its way to the Senior General. In the letter he wrote following his December 3 visit, Douglas relayed that ASSK had inquired about whether the regime has responded to her second letter. In a veiled attempt to press the government into a response before 2009 concludes, Douglas wrote that 2010 will be a "very important year" and a prompt response will ensure momentum continues. Douglas also stated that, in ASSK's view, the ball is in the government's court; ASSK believes she has taken the first step in addressing the GOB's concerns, as outlined in its 1/2007 Announcement. In the letter, Douglas also reiterated ASSK's desire to meet with the full NLD CEC.

¶10. (C) Douglas said he has close links with some of the personal physicians to senior SPDC members and their families. He counts Director of Defense Medical Services Major-General Than Aung (aka "Jimmy"), who reportedly is one of only two physicians with direct access to the Senior General, among his close friends. Separately, Douglas noted that ASSK listens to radio five-six hours per day, and reads Time and Newsweek magazines, which Special Branch allows the doctor to take to her. Douglas also told us he is responsible for ordering her meals.

Comment

¶11. (C) Douglas' views offer a unique insight into the thoughts of ASSK. It appears, at least from Douglas's account, that ASSK has come to confide in him. He is, of course, one of the few visitors she has been permitted to receive since 2003. Because Douglas is a former NLD member and political prisoner, it is often difficult to distinguish between his views and those he attributes to ASSK. In particular, we presume his comments related to ASSK's views on the NLD at least in part reflect his personal inclinations, though we also recall ASSK telling A/S Campbell of her sense that the NLD has serious internal leadership

RANGOON 00000797 003.2 OF 003

issues that only she can resolve.
DINGER